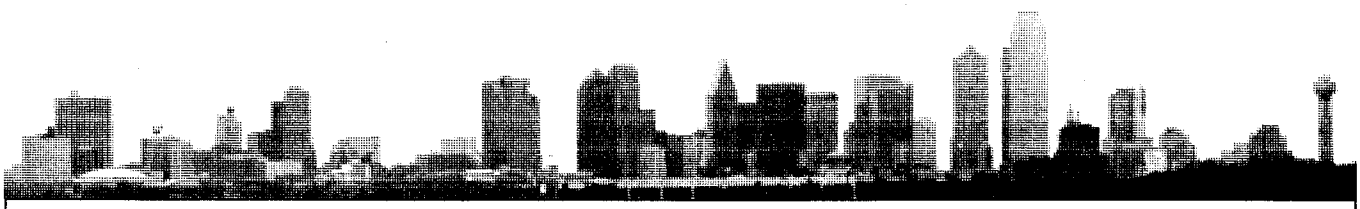
MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth Volume 13 Issue 9 — October 1995 Dallas

The 3000

destiny denied

by Johnny C. Kitchens

Five years ago, Commodore introduced the Amiga 3000. It brought a whole new level of performance for the Amiga, and a level of excitement in the industry that the Amiga had not had in a while. The 3000 appeared on the cover of a major PC magazine all by itself, it got rave reviews, and was generally heralded as the new level of performance in multimedia. The team responsible for the 3000, at Commodore, had pulled off a real feat of magic. A new size to performance form was achieved with the small size of the 3000. The 3000 can almost hide in the shadow of a 2000!

On the outside, the engineers went for a really clean look, and they finally put the power supply switch on the front of the machine! They moved the keyboard, mouse, and joystick port to the right side. This was to improve clearance between the keyboard and main unit. I did wonder why they didn't put the cable out of the side of the keyboard as well. On the back we see hints of the excitement inside. Two video connectors, one 23 pin connector of traditional Amiga design and an all new 15 pin connector, just like the ones showing up on those other kind of computers. There is a small switch marked enable and disable. It turns the de-interlacer off or on. Another exciting connector is the external SCSI connector. Inside, the engineers really pulled off quite a few wonders. The floppy and hard drives are held in place with just one screw on the mounting bay. Due to the packed nature of the 3000's design, taking it apart is a bit tough, but that's a small trade-off to the design. Another improvement was the expansion bus. The 3000 brought the Zorro III bus to life. A 32-bit bus that was compatible with the previous 16 bit Zorro II standard used in the 2000.

Finally getting to the motherboard, we get to see even more creations of wonder. Some new custom chips complimenting the new improved custom chips that helped make the Amiga famous. The new chips are Buster, Ramsey, Amber, and DMAC. Buster controls the system bus. Buster actually shows the lack of interest in the 3000. A bug in the chip wasn't found until after the 4000 was introduced. This was due to the lack of expansion cards introduced for the 3000 which meant the chip was largely unused in this machine. Ramsey is in charge of the fast ram and can determine the best way to access the type of ram used. With this chip, the Amiga was capable of accessing its ram at up to 66 megs per second — still a fast rate even today. It also allows the 3000 to address up to 1.7 gigabytes of fast ram! I'm still trying to picture having that much ram. Ever wonder why Commodore choose ZIP chips as the ram of choice for the 3000? They noticed that there was a lot of development going into them. They were and are the chip of choice for graphics cards in many PCs. This would assure ever-improving performance and prices for the chips. Amber was an exciting new chip, offering a flicker free display in any display mode. Definitely something every Amiga needs. DMAC is in charge of the DMA access. Some of the original custom chips were enhanced for the 3000. Agnus was given an extra meg of ram to control and Denise was given a few new screen modes to display. Only Paula remained unchanged. Putting sockets for ram on the motherboard was a nice improvement, but the tough-to-get-to location is a negative factor. The other big news of the motherboard was that it is a true 32-bit architecture design, running at full system speed, 25 or 16 megahertz, depending on model, making it much faster than previous designs. Even the chip ram could be accessed at 32-bits. The 3000 used the 68030 for the CPU, and featured a 68882 or 68881 FPU depending on model chosen. To compliment this fast system a special 100 pin connector was added for future upgrades in processors. To further prepare the 3000 for the future, it featured dual ROM sockets, allowing even more complex setups to be put in the kickstarts.

With the 3000 came a new operating system. It was to be known as 2.0, and probably was the biggest thing to

happen to the Amiga community as a whole. 2.0 gave the Amiga a more polished look in the GUI department, and the 3000 had it first. Another exciting first for Amigas on the 3000 was the inclusion of a SCSI controller right on the motherboard. With 32-bit access and a fast motherboard, it's still one of the fastest SCSI controllers to come along. It wouldn't be surpassed 'til the first SCSI 2 controllers showed up. Though the inclusion of many of these great features meant less need for expansion cards, some still questioned the shortage of expansion slots.

With all of the above going for it, why was the 3000 the overlooked Amiga? One thing was price. While the 3000 was being compared to Macs that cost many times more, it was still too much for most Amiga buyers. The 500 was selling like crazy due to its low price. The fact that it saved the cost of buying several cards that would be needed to make the 2000 an equal machine was missed by many buyers as well. Many of the 3000's advantages, such as 2.0, ECS chipset, and display enhancer would become available to other Amigas. Even the 2 megs of chip RAM could be had. Though the Amber chip was a real boost to the display, the Super Denise proved to be less of an upgrade than originally thought. Oddly enough, the real threat to the 3000, actually showed up on the same day as the 3000. NewTek actually made the first public showing of the card that we would all come to know as the Video Toaster at the debut show Commodore gave for the 3000! Though the Toaster would become a big boon to the Amiga community, it was a killer for the 3000. As soon as word spread that the Toaster couldn't fit the 3000, sales began to dip, while the 2000, which was slated for termination, took off. Though a relatively simple modification to the 3000 would allow the Toaster to fit, it wasn't easy enough for your average user to perform, and it would void the warranty. There was even talk of a conspiracy going on between NewTek and Commodore because of this.

All of this was the start of the end for the 3000. The 16 MHz version disappeared after a short time, having gone almost unnoticed. Sales of 3000s were falling as fast as the rest of the line were going up. Commodore had two of its better years of Amiga sales, while the 3000 was sliding into nowhere. The 3000 would get to make headlines a few more times in 1992. Without announcement, Commodore began shipping 3000s with high density floppy drives. Commodore even denied that they even existed. The rumor was that the drives were for the new Amiga about to come out, and Commodore had run out of the older drives. Even stranger, the 16 MHz 3000 reappeared at a big discount, after a nearly two year absence from the market. The 3000's final hurrah would be in the form of the 3000T. A new level of expandability was achieved with this machine. Unfortunately, it would be overshadowed by the introduction of the 4000. One magazine reviewed the 3000T and 4000 together. While the 3000 showed architectural advantages, particularly in the area of memory and the SCSI controller, the 4000's AGA chipset was a major move for the Amiga. Next Commodore announced that they were only manufacturing AGA equipped machines, and finally NewTek announced the Toaster 4000. The 3000 was a stepping stone between two eras of the Amiga, but its destiny to be known as the best of the breed was denied by circumstances. Kind of sounds like the Amiga in general.

1541

write protect warning from Q-Link

Many C-64 users have found it convenient to add a "write protect disable" switch to their disk drives in order to make it possible to "flip" a disk (writing to the other side) without punching a write enable notch for the other side. Many, however, are not aware of the potential problems associated with this.

The 1541 and 1571 write protect sensors are used for more than just detection of a write protect tab. The sensors are also used to determine when a disk has been removed from the drive. With the sensor disabled, the drive will not know when a disk has been replaced with another one. The problems caused by this can range from a small annoyance to a major disaster.

The annoyance is that, when a disk is changed, the drive may come up with a "Disk ID Mismatch" or "No Channel" error. This is due to the fact that the drive did not do the reset that it normally does when the first disk was removed. The second access to the new disk will normally correct this problem though.

The major disaster comes when two disks have the same ID. When that happens, and one is replaced with the other while the switch is on, the drive will not know that the second disk is any different than the first. Thus, instead of giving an error, it will faithfully write to the second disk using the Block Allocation Map (BAM) data from the first. This means that it can easily overwrite data on the second disk. You may think that you can avoid this disaster by using a different ID on all your disks. This is true, but there is a catch to that too. If you are using a fast formatter it may not actually use a different ID, even though you specified one and it appears to use it. The REAL ID is included in every sector of a disk, but a COSMETIC ID (the one you see when you display a directory) is not always the same as the REAL ID. Most disk utilities (such as "Disk Doctor") allow you to look at the REAL ID, and you should use one of these utilities to check your fast formatter IDs if you have one of these switches.

There are a couple of foolproof ways to avoid the problem. The first, of course, is just to notch your disks and forget about the switch. Not only does this avoid the problem, it makes it easier to tell which disks have a flip side. Another option is to turn the switch off each time you remove a disk or to initialize the drive (OPEN 15,8,15,"IO":CLOSE 15) when a new disk is inserted. The best solution is to put in a switch that automatically disables the disable switch when the drive door is opened.

The Amiga & Indy

a tale of two computers — part 2

by Rick Bilonick — Pittsburgh Commodore Group

The Amiga was for a long time just one of several product lines Commodore "marketed." By the time Commodore folded, the Amiga was (just about) the only product line that Commodore had left. Commodore, at its peak was about a US$1 billion company (this was about four years ago, when $1 billion was actually worth something!). Now the Amiga is again owned by a company that has various product lines. ESCOM is a German company that grosses about US$2 billion a year. Most accounts place the total number of Amigas (including CD32's) produced at just about 5,000,000. In 1996 the Amiga will have existed for 10 years, so that will be just about one-half million Amigas per year on average. ESCOM plans to license the Amiga technology (including its marvelous multitasking operating system) to anyone that wants to buy it. This includes the TV set-top boxes that will supposedly be part of the next revolution in television. The Amiga Operating System (AmigaOS) is a very stable, mature system. According to Amiga Technologies, the AmigaOS requires only about one eighth the resources needed by Windows (or probably OS/2 for that matter). According to my own direct experience, the full, true 32-bit AmigaOS multitasks far better than, and in most respects is superior to, Windows NT or OS/2. The Amiga pioneered the emulation of other operating systems, including DOS/Windows-OS2 and the Mac's OS. These were not toys or gimmicks but fully usable emulations. (It also had fine emulators for the C64 and probably a number of other machines.) (Those PC users now finally using [almost] full 32-bit operating systems like OS/2 and Windows NT know a lot about emulation, because these OS's must emulate DOS to run 16-bit DOS and Windows 3.1 applications.)

Commodore had existed for at least 30 years. I'm not sure how long ESCOM has been around. Of course, neither being in business a long time nor being a big company will guarantee future profitability or existence. I would guess that SGI has been around 10-15 years which means that they began manufacturing in the early 1980's. The Indy series represents an attempt to produce a Unix-based computer that would be more "affordable" to a wider range of people. It is more affordable, when compared to the next-in-line Indigo 2 series that retails above $20,0000. (All currently manufactured SGI computers from the Indy up to their super computers are binary-compatible which means they run the same operating system and software). SGI appears interested in the high-end home market, but that does not appear to be a priority. They seem most interested in business users who will be more willing to buy — and maintain — truly state-of-the-art computers.

The operating system used by SGI computes is known as IRIX (currently at version 5.3) and is UNIX-based. Amiga users would feel at home on an SGI computer, because the Amiga OS is very similar (even to the point of using "/" for path and file names instead of the annoying "\" used by PC's). Although UNIX can be intimidating and even overwhelming, IRIX provides (like the Amiga) a very user-friendly graphical user interface (GUI) along with shell windows for those who insist on using a command-line interface. (A command-line interface admittedly can be very useful). IRIX is much like AmigaOS, but is much more powerful. On the Amiga, when you copy a file from a floppy to the hard drive using the GUI, you can't use the OS to do anything else connected with the file system, such as copying a file from one hard drive partition to another. (This is not true if you have multiple shell windows open. You can use each independently.) Of course, you can simultaneously use other programs that are RUNNING. But if they aren't already running, you can't start them running using the GUI while the file copy is still in progress. You have to wait for the file copy to finish before running a new program from the GUI. IRIX is not hindered in this way.

IRIX, as all UNIX systems, has networking thoroughly integrated into it. This is extremely useful if the computer is used in a computer network. It is also useful even to stand-alone computers, because PPP and SLIP are built-in. PPP and SLIP are useful for connecting through the telephone network (or even just a serial null-modem cable). UNIX has been around a long time, and has various flavors. IRIX supports both X1 and Motif. This means that you can run programs that were written for these versions. Of course, the source code must be recompiled specifically for IRIX, but this is usually not a big problem.

How do Silicon Graphics Inc. and the now defunct Commodore compare? (It is a bit premature to compare SGI to Amiga Technologies at this time!) In many ways, the two companies could not be more different. Commodore was constantly criticized for not marketing the Amiga. Much of the criticism was well deserved, but perhaps not all. Many said that Commodore should have done more television advertising. (Although I had never seen a television advertisement for the Amiga, several people have told me that when the Amiga was first introduced, there were television ads.) Similarly, I have never seen a TV ad for SGI products. However, since the Amiga was/is aimed more directly at the home consumer market, TV advertising would have probably helped Commodore more than SGI. Commodore may have been correct in its decision not to do more TV advertising due to the substantial cost of TV. I believe that Commodore would have had to substantially increase the price of the

Amiga to pay for TV ads, at least initially until sales substantially increased. Regardless of the TV ad debate, Commodore could have done much more by using less expensive advertising media, for example magazines and newspapers. Commodore did do this, but probably not nearly enough. The most difficult thing to understand is why Commodore did not capitalize on two of its most important assets: 1) the use of Amigas in high-profile projects (like *Babylon 5, SeaQuest DSV. Robocop* and numerous others), and 2) the almost fanatical/cult-like devotion of Amiga owners. SGI looses no opportunity to hype the use of its computers in making movies (like *Terminator 2* and *Jurassic Park*) and television, and in every area where their computers are used. They also make great and effective use of the Internet. To be fair, Commodore did do some nifty, memorable, possibly even historic computer roll-outs. For example, the introduction of the Amiga 1000 using Pittsburgh's own Andy Warhol and Debra Harrie. I also remember the double-page ad in the Wall Street Journal for the introduction of the Amiga 3000. Commodore was criticized for not providing more after-sales support. SGI provides support, but it ain't free. Many other computer companies provide "free" support. The catch is, you have to go through hell to access it over the telephone. You could literally spend an hour on the phone until you actually speak to a living human technical support person.

In the next installment, I'll discuss the availability, quality and cost of software and peripherals. I will also try to summarize the pros and cons of the Amiga and the Indy. ✓

Ten Years Ago

a look back at the MCCC
by Bill Raecke

The following is the quarterly meeting announcement that appeared in the October, 1985 issue of the *MCCC News*. This was a very significant meeting. It was here that most members got their first look at the brand new Commodore 128 and Amiga computers. For those who don't remember, this club used to have large meetings once a quarter where all the chapters would meet in one location. Club membership stood at about 600. Quarterly meetings were rather packed. The Club President at the time was me, Bill Raecke. The club VP and person responsible for organizing this meeting was Harold Williams.

The October meeting of the Mid-Cities Commodore Club will feature telecommunications services. There will be live demonstrations of the PlayNET, Startext, and Viewtron services. These services offer news, electronic mail, encyclopedia information, upload, download, and recreational activities. MCCC members will have the opportunity to join some services at special rates. The meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am, October 19 at the Western Hills Inn. Please note the change of the meeting time and location. ✓

Chunky or Planar

what's the difference?

by Joseph Luk

Simply put, the terms chunky and planar (short for bitplanar) refer to different ways of storing graphics information in a computer's memory. They are rather easy to understand, as far as things go, but incredibly difficult to explain.

Computer images are arranged as a grid of pixels, each of which can be thought of as a number representing the color number of the pixel, sort of like a paint-by-numbers scheme. For example, here's a simplified example image, in four colors:

00302132

The Amiga stores this image in a bitplane mode. That is, it is represented by several planes of bits (binary digits, 1s or 0s). This is a four-color image, so each color number could be represented by two bits. Therefore there are two bitplanes:

00100110 Here's bitplane 0
00101011 And here's bitplane 1
———— Now, let's add them up, binary style:
00302132

Which is the final image. If the image was in two dimensions, it would truly be composed of bit planes. However, I'd need three dimensions to show multiple bitplanes overlayed, and therefore for simplicity we're working in one dimension (which is all we need).

Now, there's another way of storing this image. How about if we localize the bit data in little chunks?

00 00 11 00 01 10 11 01 = 00302132

This is the principle of the chunky pixel mode.

Both methods of image storage are perfectly logical, and no one can say that one is better than the other. However, there are certain technical aspects which cause certain advantages and disadvantages.

First, if you've seen colored text scroll on your Amiga, you know there is a bit of "flicker" that arises. Specifically, what happens is that while the text is scrolling, its color temporarily changes to something completely different. What's happening is that the computer's moving several bitplanes of data while the raster (monitor electron gun) is sweeping across the screen. What that means is that, if the raster catches the data while it's being moved, you can end up with some bitplanes being moved and some not. What if we filled bitplane 1 in the example above with 0s? Instantly all the 3s become 1s, and the 2s become 0s! This is what causes "flicker" when certain colors are scrolled. By contrast, if a chunky pixel display is caught while scrolling, all we see is a partially-scrolled image; the colors are preserved (since their units are the small ones).

That's a disadvantage to planar pixels, but what about chunky pixels? Well, recall that a computer organizes information in terms of 8 bit bytes. These groups are static; you cannot decide to all of a sudden organize data in terms of three bytes or something! Therefore, when using chunky pixels, things get complicated if we decide to use an inconvenient number of bits per pixel. In practice, the 8-bit (256-color) mode, and 24-bit (16 million color) modes are the most common candidates for chunky pixel displays.

Finally, certain effects can be accomplished with the different systems. Bitplanar mode is particularly useful for things like shadows (where an extra bitplane is set with s instead of 0s), and chunky mode is great for perspective and "mapping" (since the data for each pixel is localized in a single "chunk"). The latter advantage makes chunky pixel mode really great for games, and is what made *Wolfenstein 3-D* possible.

We all know that Amigas use the bitplane system for storing images. However, the Macintosh and PC(VGA) both use chunky pixel modes. While we can optimize our RAM usage with "Bizarre" modes like 8- and 128-color, they gain the advantages of non-flicker scrolling, and the programming simplicity of just writing a byte where you want the pixel to go.

The difference between the two modes becomes problematic in things like emulation. EMPLANT has a "chunky to planar" routine which it uses to convert a Macintosh display into an Amiga one. "Chunky to planar" routines are also useful for getting chunky-inclined things to run on Amigas (see TMAPDemo, rotdemo). On a side note, there was some confusion as to what EMPLANT used the MMU for with regard to chunky to planar. The MMU itself is incapable of performing the algorithm for the conversion; rather, it is used to detect what portions of the display memory are updated from the Mac side, and therefore the processor is saved from having to perform the chunky to planar conversion for the entire display.

I sincerely hope that helped clear up most of the mystery concerning the terms "Chunky" and "Planar". ✓

Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks from Bill Raecke

Virus Checker by John Veldthuis

Looking for the latest *Virus Checker*? Look no further. Version 7.0 is on MCCC-A_940. This is a major revision and provides some new features to the way things work. It will even put an App-Icon on your Workbench (if your like) so that any disk you drop on it will automatically be checked for link viruses. It's a more convenient setup than before. Of course, just as in previous versions, *Virus Checker* checks for boot-block viruses each time a new floppy is inserted. Stay current.

Icon Deluxe by Brian Tietz

Back in July, I wrote about this program and recommended that you give it a look. It's the best icon editor I've run across. (I haven't had a chance to check out *Iconian* yet since I don't have Workbench 3.1 installed.) *Icon Deluxe* will do just about anything you could want an icon editor to do. The only thing different here from the full shareware version is a looong delay before it will "save" an icon. Since the shareware fee is only $10, that shouldn't be much of a problem. This month's MCCC-A_944 has version 1.10. Check it out!

Iconian by Chad W. Randall

Speaking of *Iconian*, here it is. I haven't been able to take a look at this myself (as I said, I don't yet have Workbench 3.1 installed) but from all reports this is the ultimate icon editor. If you have the necessary operating system, check it out on MCCC-A_945.

ExtraInfo by Nick Christie

Here's another that I wrote up in July. It's meant to replace the standard icon "Information" menu item in Workbench. Check out the description in the July newsletter for details (or simply check out the program). This version (1.3) adds the ability to directly replace the Workbench "Information" function (in Workbench 3.x), adds support for NewIcons, as well as many other new features. It's on MCCC-A_936.

XPRzmodem by Robert Williamson

Anyone who uses the BBS should already know this, but there's a new version of XPRzmodem available. It works great. I wanted to mention it here because there may be some of you who are still using the old 1K ZModem block size. If you have a high-speed modem (14,400 and up) you could probably gain some speed on downloads and uploads by switching to an 8K block size. This library supports that feature and is quite fast to begin with. On the MCCC BBS, just be sure to change your protocol to ZModem-8K, make a similar change in your terminal software, and sit back and watch the difference. The latest XPRzmodem.library and documentation is on MCCC-A_937.

Typeface by David Kinder

I've owned an Amiga for 10 years now and I've been waiting all that time for someone to come up with a decent icon editor. I guess it pays to be patient. David Kinder has finally designed *Typeface* and the world is a better place. Now, you may not want to design fonts — I know I don't. But you've probably had times when you wanted to clean one up a little — or maybe just add a character or two. Now it's easy to do that. *Typeface* works with bitmapped fonts — the standard Amiga screen fonts. It also is able to read in a Compugraphic font (the standard Amiga outline font format) so that you can clean it up and save it back out as a bitmapped font if you have a desire or need to do that. This is highly recommended. You can find it on MCCC-A_941.

VMM by Martin Apel

Need more memory? Here's a way to add additional memory to your system without spending money! All you need is a little (or a lot of) free hard drive space. VMM stands for Virtual Memory Manager. All you need is a hard drive, a couple of megs of RAM, Workbench 2.0 or greater and an Amiga with an MMU. MUI (from the library or BBS) is required to run the user GUI interface. VMM will work set aside a portion of your hard drive to use as memory. Either a file or a partition will work, although the partition will be faster. I've been using VMM for about a month now with no problems (although my system does seem to crater if I turn it off — I just don't turn it off once I start it!). You can configure the program to use virtual memory by default for ALL programs or just the ones you specify. You can configure it to store program data or both program code and data. Overall, VMM is just as fast, more configurable, and less restrictive than *GigaMem*, a commercial product selling for over $100. The registration fee for VMM is just $20 — and the version in the library is not disabled in any way (this is the way shareware is supposed to work!). If you'd like to be running an Amiga with an extra 20, 40, 100, whatever megabytes of memory, check this out. It's on MCCC-A_942.

WinTris by Gothmog / Spicelab

It's just a simple Tetris game that runs on Workbench. Sometimes simple is better. This is one of those times. There are plenty of options, including the option to size the window, but it remains a small, well-behaved program that can be played while your computer

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SwitchHitter

use a pc keyboard with your amiga
by John Scott Freeland — a usenet review

SwitchHitter is a keyboard adapter that allows you to use IBM AT compatible keyboards on your Amiga 2000/2500/3000/4000 and CD32. (More than likely, an easy solution will be available for A500/1000s.)

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LIST PRICE
$45 (US), ground shipping included.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
HARDWARE
Needs a "keyboard port." I believe the A600 and A1200 machines would require some rather extensive hacking to be able to accept this adapter.

SOFTWARE
None. This product simply replaces the standard Amiga keyboard hardware.

COPY PROTECTION
None.

MACHINE USED FOR TESTING
A2000, A2500, A3000, A4000 and CD32.

INSTALLATION
Just power down the Amiga, unplug the old keyboard, plug the SwitchHitter in and the PC keyboard into the SwitchHitter and power back up.

There are some DIP switches for customizing the setup, but the default is fine for a start — more on this later..

REVIEW
I'm forced to use a PC Clone at work. The latest thing to appear on my system there is a Microsoft Natural© keyboard. This is one of those "Ergonomic" keyboards with the left-hand side of the keyboard slightly offset (approximate 10 degree angle) from the right-hand side, and the numeric keypad is more 'sculpted' to fit the fingers in the 'ten-key form' of entry.

Actually, I've gotten to like this keyboard. I've only been a marginal 'touch-typist' and this keyboard has helped enforce proper practice. Besides — it looks cool! So, it was time to start looking for keyboard adapters so I could use one on my A4000.

During my search, Dana Peters and I got into an EMail exchange about a new gadget he was developing, the SwitchHitter. I was looking for support of the additional 'Windows' keys(at the bottom of the "alpha" keys at approximately the same position as the "Amiga" keys on a standard C= keyboard). Dana was very supportive and essentially did a custom design for the "Natural".

When I received the prototype, I was pleased to see that not only was the "Natural" support well done, but Dana had also added other features:

• StickyKeys — a convenience to those who prefer to type with one hand, and/or enables users with limited manual dexterity to use the Amiga. Enabling "Sticky Mode" is just a matter of pressing and holding the ScrollLock key. After two seconds, the "Scroll Lock" LED flashes on to indicate sticky mode is on. Now, whenever a modifier key is pressed and released (Ctrl, Shift, Amiga or Alt) it will be automatically "stuck" down, the "Scroll Lock" LED lights to indicate the modifier is stuck. The stuck modifiers are automatically released after any non-modifier (or the Scroll Lock) key is typed. If a non-modifier key is typed while a modifier is being held, the modifier does not remain stuck when it's released permitting normal two-handed typing while in sticky mode. Exiting Sticky mode is like entering — press the ScrollLock for two seconds and you'll get a flash from the "Scroll Lock" LED.

• Keyboard Mouse — yes, the Amiga does have that feature built- in — this is just a nicer way of taking advantage of that... When "NumLock" is on (indicated by it's LED), the numeric keypad 8, 2, 4 and 6 keys are up, down, left and right respectively, the 0 and . keys are the left and right mouse buttons. In conjunction with Sticky Keys, the "mouse buttons" in this mode can be locked on for even easier manipulation.

• For those Not using the "Natural" keyboard — there are four DIP switches for several optional keyboard mappings. One setting provides a proper "spatial" orientation for those that prefer not having to re-learn a keyboard layout.

• Almost all of the keys are mapped to do something useful:

101-Key AT Keyboard	Amiga Equivalent
PrtScr/SysRq	Help
Delete	Del
Insert	Alt-g (accent)
Pause/Break	unused
Home	Shift left arrow
End	Shift right arrow
Page Up	Shift down arrow

And in addition:

Microsoft Natural KB	Amiga Equivalent
Left Windows	Left Amiga
Right Windows	Right Amiga
Menu	Left A-m

DOCUMENTATION
One 8 1/2x11 two-sided page. This is all that was required for a product of this type. The DIPs were explained in a logical, easy to understand fashion.

LIKES
I like the complete support of the Micro*oft Natural keyboard and the "StickyKeys" feature is quite cool

DISLIKES AND SUGGESTIONS
My only suggestion would be some way to "program" the F11 and F12 keys. I had no other use for them as the MS Nat. has a place for the "Amiga" keys.

COMPARISON TO OTHER SIMILAR PRODUCTS
The only other device like this that I've had my hands on is the PC keyboard socket in the SX1 (CD32 expansion). There are some "keyboard buffering" problems with that one. I went back to the keyboard socket on the CD32 when the SwitchHitter freed up my A4000 keyboard.

BUGS
None that I could find.

VENDOR SUPPORT
I've been quite pleased with the support so far. No need as yet to test his repair support. My only association is as a beta tester for the prototype — I now own a production unit. I have no vested interest in his company and Naturally :-) wish him the best.

WARRANTY
No warranty is mentioned in the simple documentation. Very little could go wrong with a discrete component like this, anyway.

CONCLUSIONS
I'd give this six out of six stars. A very cool gadget. I'm very happy I found this product — it's made my clone friends envious that it can make a Natural KB even better than when it's plugged into a "native" system. ✓

amiga library news
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continues to work on other things...downloading for example. This one is on MCCC-A_943.

JPeg Pics

Here are a couple you won't want to miss. On MCCC-A_947 is a beautiful picture of a group of cheetahs as well as that old standard, the picture of a mandrill. Skip ahead to MCCC-A_948 and you'll find another beauty — a picture of a wolf in a snowstorm. On that same disk is a GIF pic of another wolf (although this one may actually be a coyote) in another snowstorm. These are all MUST HAVE pictures.

Tracker Music

There are several new tunes among this month's disks. The one that caught my ear is a tune called *Banana Boat.* It's the first time I've heard a reggae tune done in tracker format. It's a nice change. As a matter of fact, it's a pretty nice tune, too. Listen for it on MCCC-A_949.

In Progress by Darkness

I know, it sounds rather obscure. But *In Progress* is a very nice animation. It was the 70KB winner intro at the Euskal Amiga Party 2 in Spain. It will work on all Amigas (500 to 4000) and all chip sets (OCS, ECS, AGA). The only special requirement is that you must switch to PAL screen mode before running it (or you won't see anything). It has some very nice effects and is well worth the trouble. It even exits cleanly when it's finished so that you can continue with what you're doing without re-booting. Check it out on MCCC-A_949. ✓

Thought For The Month

You know you're a redneck when...

- You prefer car keys to Q-Tips
- You have a rag for a gas cap
- Your parakeet knows the phrase "Open up, Police!"
- You have flowers planted in a toilet in your front yard
- You mow your lawn & find a car
- Your mother keeps a spit cup on the ironing board.

CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga By-The-Loop

Johnny Kitchens

By the time you read this, another METCOM will have come and gone for the club. Our biggest event of the year certainly takes the biggest effort of the club. I hope you took advantage of it. Another thought for September comes in the form of Escom. Escom, from all indications, has the Amiga in production and moving. 1200s and 4000Ts are already moving into the pipeline, though the 1200 appears to be slated for all markets but the U.S.! I'm sure Escom has many decisions to make, and pleasing everyone will be tough. I expect it will take several years to get things back on track, and we can enjoy the ride to the future.

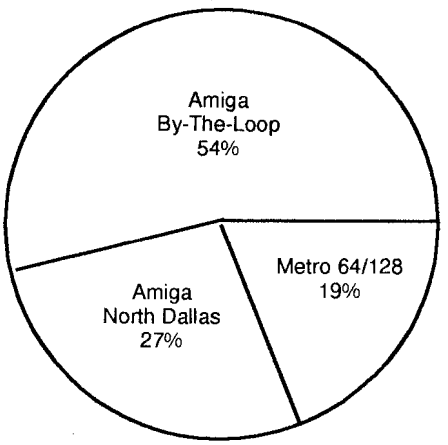
Tonight the meeting started at 7:38 with David Owens leading things in his usual experienced manner. He led off with a discussion on what to expect at METCOM. Ned Kelly, who is in charge of METCOM, filled in the details. Ned also discussed our ever-increasing library disks, and the fact that the best of the best is available on the super disk collection. If you haven't got all of those you are missing out on quite a collection of software.

Our next part of the meeting seemed to be a bit shy in body. Just three questions popped up. A question on *FastView* came up. *FastView* is the latest and greatest image viewer for the Amiga. If you haven't tried it, take a look. A question on an MMU came up next. MMUs have been a part of the Amiga since the first 2500 was introduced. Oddly enough, most Amigas don't have one. It was introduced originally due to a need in UNIX. Thankfully other uses were found for it. The last question had to do with a 14400 modem problem. Hopefully the setting that was suggested will work.

We got some new news from Soft Logik, but not exactly the kind we wanted to hear. They are re-releasing PageStream 2.22, as well as special versions for a cover disk of a magazine, and for users with limited systems. Work is progressing on 3.1. I hope so!

From there we moved to our main presentation. David Campbell brought out his 4000 to show his own creation in genealogy software. This allows him to track and keep records on every square inch of his family tree. A major undertaking from the vastness of the data presented. Even a map to show distribution of his family across the U.S.! Once again, a dedicated Amiga user showed us all what could be accomplished with dedication to a thought on the Amiga. I'm sure that quite a few people left that night wondering where their roots led to. So don't miss out. Be sure to make it to the October 10th meeting. David Crumpton will be showing everything you wanted to know about sound digitizing. See you there!

Membership Distribution



Membership Notice

As of this printing, these memberships expired in Sept.	These memberships are due to expire at the end of October.
Mark Dettmann	Robert D. Belmares
Tom Hayden III	Jeff Fallen
David & Joanna Owens	John D. Parsons
	John C. Rainard
	Donald J. Sobieck

Amiga North Dallas

Michael Turner

Our last two meetings have certainly had their surprises. If you were there you know what I mean. If you weren't, here's a short sysnopsis:

In our August meeting, our own Eddie Corr was going to demonstrate *Deluxe Paint V*, which handles both Anim opts 5 and 8 and has a few other nifty additions, but had some trouble getting it going on our demonstration computer. While he was sifting through his computer files using *Directory Opus*, several members asked questions concerning *Directory Opus*, and the demonstration of *Deluxe Paint V* turned into a demonstration of, what else... *Directory Opus*! Our presenter explained how to set up commands in the utility, using the way he set up our own library archiver *LZX* in *Directory Opus* on his computer as an example. He also went through using script files in Opus as well as using ARexx with the program also. Finally, Eddie demonstrated using the different "tooltypes" and "classes" of files used in *Directory Opus*. Since we were all looking at the files on Eddie's computer anyway, Eddie also ended up demonstrating *Personal Paint*, *Mandel Mountains*, *Scenery* and

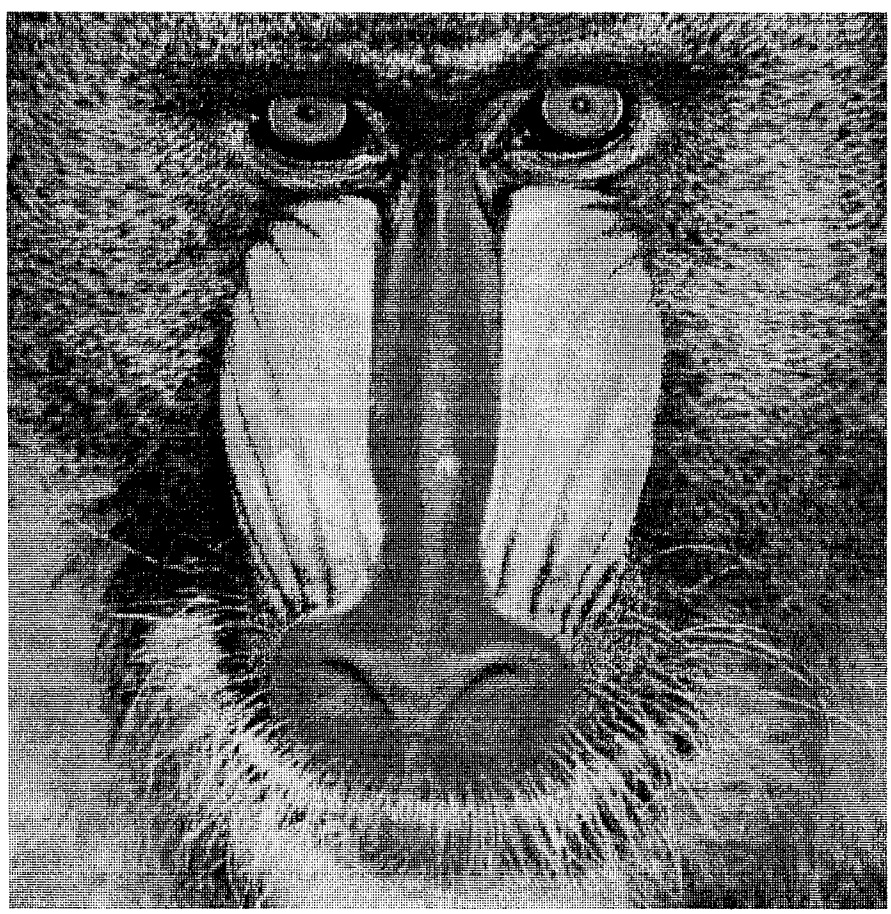
CHAPTER NEWS

Professional Page. Eddie was not too familiar with Pro-Page but that was not a problem as Tom Cotzer stepped up to show how the program worked. Tom seemed to be very familiar with the program and explained what he liked and disliked about it. Tom used the program to make a mock newsletter page and showed how the program used boxes to combine text and graphics. Tom demonstrated how to rescale pictures and text and the different options for using both of them. It was quite an enlightening session and we kind of forgot about *Deluxe Paint*!

Our September meeting was held in Richardson Square Mall and naturally our meeting started with News, Views, Rumors and What-Ever-Else-Anyone-Might-Care-To-Bring-Up. One member mentioned that Escom has actually started production of the A1200 and the first ones have come off the line! On the other side of the coin, however, apparently the A4000Ts have not. After a few more interesting items and opinions concerning Escom's acquisition of Commodore, it was on to our demonstration for the evening.

Our presenter was Thomas Dye who demonstrated *Cnet 3.5*, a BBS program. Thomas runs a BBS, The File Exchange, and he demonstrated just how much work a BBS can take. Thomas explained that *Cnet* is not quite as user-friendly as *Xenolink* but that once you get used to it, it's fairly easy to use. Our presenter explained the use of MCI (Message Command Interface) commands and even had one of us call his board and log on as a demonstration. Thomas' board also makes use of RIP graphics which lets you use your mouse on the BBS just like you would on your computer at home! Neat, huh! Our presenter also demonstrated all the headaches that can go along with running a BBS. (Somehow, the subject of a "twit filter" always comes up!) All in all, it gave us all a good idea of just how much work is involved in being a SysOp. There are a lot of unsung heroes out there! Thomas also mentioned that his board had recently crashed with a technical problem but should have been back up by the time you read this, so give his board a call!

Finally, a few other notes. October's meeting will be held in the Community Room at Richardson Square Mall on the third THURSDAY of the month. Apparently, the Community Room is booked on Tuesday nights already for the rest of the year. The Community Room is in the main part of the mall by Sears directly across the hall from Radio Shack. Also, unfortunately, the Community Room is unavailable for our November and December meetings because it becomes the gift wrapping center for the mall during the Christmas season. Thus, once again, we are looking for a meeting place for November and December. Steve has mentioned asking community colleges, libraries, civic centers... etc. with no success so if you have a suggestion won't you please give him a call or drop a note on our MCCC bulletin board. Many thanks need to go out to Steve for continually coming up with presenters for our meetings — not to mention continually finding a meeting place for our chapter, which has been a particularly tough job this year. Eddie also reminded us that elections are not too far off, and we've already had a couple of volunteers, so don't forget about that. See you in October!



The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are $24 per year or $15 for six months. and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional $12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

Copyright Information: Material printed in the MCCC News is not copyrighted unless so noted. Articles may be reprinted or otherwise distributed by other user groups or by individuals who may find it helpful as long as proper credit is given to the author and to the MCCC.

Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — $36 ($96); Half Page — $18 ($48); Quarter Page — $12 ($32); Business Card — $6 ($16). Materials to be inserted will cost $.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Writer* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at $1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

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MCCC BBS Numbers

(METRO 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4191
(METRO 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4196

MCCC Chapter Officers

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Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Tuesday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Saturday	Metro C-64/128 Chapter
3rd Tuesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 3 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — David Owens' Place
4640 Greenfern Lane, Fort Worth

Oct 10 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Oct 14 Metro C-64/128 Chapter
1:30 pm — UNT Health Sciences Building
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

Oct 19 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Richardson Square Mall
Community Room — Richardson

November Newsletter Deadline — 7am, October 28

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
Be sure to show your membership card

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